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681 sanction of the recognized marriage ceremonies were ostracized to
684 the extent of having to live outside of the village stockade or, if
736 they belonged to a community living in a single village-house, they were required to occupy a room detached from the main building.
681 The two other classes of ostracized persons, namely, widows and
761 orphans, were supposed to have incurred the displeasure of their
774 "Bgha," and it was feared that their misfortune would become contagious if they were allowed to remain in the village. That is, the "Bgha" of other families would imitate the "Bgha" of the widows' and orphans' families in eating the "k'las" of other husbands and parents, thus depriving the village of more of its members. It was believed that this danger could be avoided by driving the bereft ones into the jungle to shift for themselves. The added risk of the future marriage of these baneful persons was taken into account. This was perhaps negligible in the case of the widows, but the orphans should not be allowed to grow up with other children to become in time eligible for marriage with them. Left to range through the jungle, such orphans, if they survived, generally developed a daring and resourcefulness that inspired the ordinary folk of the village with wonder. Their deeds came to be thought of
● [791] as due to a supernatural power. In short, they were believed to be magicians.[4]

Family Relationships

595 In the chapter on Marriage Customs mention is made of the
587 general chastity of the Karen and of their monogamous marriages within the tribe. The rule is for a man to have one wife; but now and then a secondary wife or concubine, known as a "ma po tha," is supported. It may be that on account of the childlessness of the first wife the new connection has been entered into for the sake of offspring, or that the man has simply followed his own inclinations in the matter. Such unions are effected without the formality of marriage ceremonies and are not recognized by Karen society, being entirely irregular.

584 Westerners, accustomed as they are to doing their own courting, sometimes wonder how happy marriages can be effected in the case of young men and women who are strangers and have never met perhaps till they come together in the marriage chamber. We must remember, however, that with a people like the Karen the physical relationship is more significant than the spiritual. 'Senti-

[4] See Chapter XXVI, pp. 269-276.

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789 751 gun at them; but I had one of my native helpers fire the gun, in order to preclude the deduction on the part of the owner of the stones that a foreigner's handling of the gun had prevented the working of the charm. The discharge of the weapon knocked the stones to bits to the great surprise of the owner, who exclaimed repeatedly that the stones were worthless after all. Such decisive demonstrations of the uselessness of magic were, of course, lacking in the olden time, and the failure of a charm to accomplish what was desired could always be explained by some unfavorable circumstance, such as the omission of some necessary rite or the ill-humor of the spirit whose coöperation was necessary. It should be remembered also that the absence of the accustomed charm produces an adverse psychological effect on those depending on them. I am told that both Karen and Burman boys who play football, have a "medicine" to protect them from injury and to bring victory. Without this talisman, which has its counterpart in the mascot of some American baseball and football teams, the players are apt to do poorly and lose the game. In like manner a Karen who attributes his indisposition to the evil influence of some one who is bewitching him, is likely to become worse through the power of suggestion; just as his fellow-villager, who has placed himself under the protective charms and remedies of the medicine-man often derives benefit from his own faith in their efficiency.

795 789 791 In some outlying Karen districts there are still persons of both sexes among the Karens who profess to maintain communication with the powers of the invisible world. Of these "wi," so-called, one group has dealings with the powers of evil, while the other looks to "Y'wa," the eternal God, for the revelation of unseen things. The latter group is sometimes designated leaders of religion ("bu hko," heads of the feasts). The prophesies of the deliverance of the Karen from the Burman yoke and of the coming of the white brother were uttered by some of these "wi." The members of the former group are believed to be able to see into hell and to bring evil forces to bear on men. They go into trances and work themselves into a state of frenzy, writhing on the ground and frothing at the mouth until they have received a message. Then they calm down and deliver their oracle in verse. They are reputed to have often deceived their patrons. They are at enmity with the prophets of the second group. Their influence is limited to those of weak "so" or personal powers.[2] Not only have strong-

[2] See Chapter XXI on Religious Conceptions, p. 221.

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736 boos. Quite satisfied with this demonstration of their magic
789 power, the grandmother allowed them to go on their mission. In
538 the battle that followed the seven orphans severally engaged the champions of the seven victorious villages and won back for the maiden's father the treasure that he had been forced to pay over in the previous raids. The oldest of the brothers then received the hand of the chief's daughter in marriage, having cleared himself of the curse that had rested upon him as an orphan.

Why such extraordinary powers have been attributed to the once despised orphan is not known. At first he was feared for the bad luck he might bring to the other inhabitants of the village, if allowed to remain within the stockade. That he did not perish as an outcast in the jungle must have been regarded as a sort of miracle by the village community, whose members had always lived and worked together in close interdependence. They must have looked upon him with awe and believed that he was protected by some powerful influence, not only from the evilly disposed "Bgha" but also from the dangers of the forest. It was, therefore, natural enough to regard him in course of time as a person who had "pgho." In these later days orphans appear to have been considered less extraordinary persons, as indicated by the following couplet:

[539] "In olden times the orphans had magic.
Orphans now must talk" [like other persons].

● 791 The "k' thi thra" or "medicine-teachers" constitute another
753 group that should be mentioned among magic-workers. It is true
757 that they possess a rude knowledge of the efficacy of roots and herbs, but they also sometimes dispense disgusting and filthy concoctions. The Karen, like other primitive peoples, regard sickness as due to some mysterious force or "mana" and believe that all medicine, even that prescribed by European physicians, operates to dispel or vanquish this force. They expect a dose to cure immediately and discredit a medicine that must be taken repeatedly. Hence, in general, they prefer their native "medicine-teacher" and his nostrums to the educated physician and his medicine, the therapeutic effects of which are beyond their understanding. Doubtless, some Karens do distinguish between the charm and the drug, but most of them seem to cling to the idea that the drug has more or less of the charm connected with it.

789 Magic among the Karen, as among other primitive races, is divisible into white and black magic. The former is the beneficent